

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

I establish my Covenant with you.

First Reading

Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love.

Psalms

'Repent, and believe the Good News.'

Gospel

Lord our God,
In this time of repentance
we call out for your mercy.
Bring us back to you
and to the life your Son won for us
by his death on the cross.

Old Opening Prayer (ii)

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Genesis 9: 8–15; Psalm 24 (25); 1 Peter 3: 18–22; Mark 1: 12–15

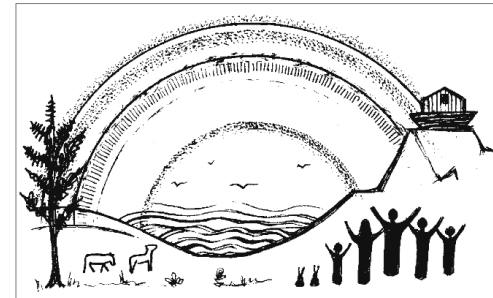
Ivan Kravskoy, *Christ in the Wilderness* (1872)



The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



First Sunday of Lent
Year B, 18th February 2024

The Good News
of the Covenant

We began our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday. This first Sunday of Lent now leads us immediately into Jesus's own journey into the desert in prayer, fasting, and to face temptation.

The **First Reading** reminds us of the journey of God's chosen people. Here God establishes his Covenant with Noah and all his descendants, and with the whole of creation. Never again will God destroy the earth with a flood. He leaves a bow in the sky to confirm this.

St Peter (**Second Reading**) links the few people Noah saved 'by water' to ourselves. We are saved through the baptism that Christ won for us by his death and resurrection.

The **Gospel** gives a short account of Jesus being tempted in the desert. He emerges ready to proclaim his message: 'The kingdom of God is close at hand'.

The **Psalms** reflects the message of hope that is contained in all the readings. The Lord's ways are faithfulness and love.

May we take heart from the scriptures as we begin our Lenten journey, ready to follow the Lord's ways, and eager to learn his paths.



Opening Prayer

Grant, almighty God,
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,
that we may grow in understanding
of the riches hidden in Christ
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.

Psalm 24 (25)

**R./ Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love
for those who keep your covenant.**

Lord, make me know your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:
for you are God my saviour.

Remember your mercy, Lord,
and the love you have shown from of old.
In your love remember me,
because of your goodness, O Lord.

The Lord is good and upright.
He shows the path to those who stray,
he guides the humble in the right path;
he teaches his way to the poor.

As I prepare to pray, I still my whole self by quietening my mind and breathing in God's presence. I remain in this stillness.
When I'm ready, I read the text a few times.
Perhaps the refrain draws me, and I can spend time repeating it slowly several times. The Lord's covenant is 'faithfulness and love'.
I read the Psalm again.
What do I want to pray for as I begin Lent? How can I know God's ways, his paths for me? How can I be open to his inner promptings? God has made a Covenant with his people. Why do I ask God to remember this? Maybe I ask for my faith to be strengthened, because in his 'goodness' God will do all things for me.
God walks with me on my journey. I note the verbs: he *shows*, he *guides*, he *teaches*. How does this make me feel?
I spend time talking to the Lord. I also spend time listening to him. How does he do these things for me?
When I stray, God remembers his mercy. I ponder this.
What does it mean for me this Lent?
As I end my prayer, I turn to God in gratitude for his love and faithfulness, his goodness and mercy.
I finish with a *Glory be ...*

Gospel Mark 1: 12–15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come', he said, 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Good News.'

I come to my place of prayer. I become still and relaxed, but also attentive and alert. In confidence, I rest in God's loving presence.
When I feel ready, I read the Gospel text.
I consider Jesus. He has just come up from Nazareth to the Jordan to be baptised by John the Baptist. He has heard his Father's voice: '*You are my Son the Beloved, my favour rests on you.*'
And then the Spirit drives him immediately into the desert.
Jesus is responding to the action of the Father and the Spirit within him. How do I imagine he feels?
The wilderness is harsh and his ordeal testing.
How does this make me feel at the beginning of Lent?
What do I think of being in the desert with Jesus?
Have I endured harsh times ... times of temptation? If so, what or who kept me going?
I see Jesus with the wild beasts, but he comes to no harm. God protects him.
In what way do I feel protected, even when I suffer?
How can this give me the confidence to face the negative things, the 'wild beasts' within myself this Lent?
Jesus goes to Galilee filled with the Spirit, more confident in his mission. In gratitude I turn to him, with an open heart, asking to fully accept his Good News.
I may spend some time asking for this. Perhaps I pray for my community, or intercede for Jesus's own country, and the whole world.
I end with a slow *Our Father*.